I would like to start us off with a little detour.

Last year in August, after 20 years outside my country of birth, I returned to Germany. One of the delightful things about Germany that I had forgotten is that the public broadcasters regularly do film adaptations of fairy tales. Usually these are fairy tales collected by the Brothers Grimm, so they are, at least in the imagination of ordinary Germans, about as German as fairy tales come. And one Sunday morning shortly after I returned to Germany, I watched one such adaptation. It was called The Salt Princess.

It is your typical fairy tale story with a king, three princesses, and a prince, but this prince was special:
He was black.

I was absolutely thrilled. The Germany I had left 20 years ago was, representationally speaking, dreadfully white. And here was a black man playing a key role in a quintessentially German fairy tale.

But, a little while later in the story, they had the Prince explain that yes, there are princes in Africa too and he had been sent here by his African king father to explore Europe.

I’m now starting to come to the topic of our talk tonight, which is concerned with heritage interpretation in an age of migrations (MeLa* Project 2015, p.8). This example of a TV fairy tale adaptation illustrates many aspects that also apply to our contemporary approaches to heritage and heritage interpretation.

When the Prince first appeared on screen, I imagined one black and one white German child sitting on a sofa somewhere in Germany just like I was, watching this, and both equally and naturally identifying with this Prince riding through an imagined Germany of the past.
But then, as they had the Prince refer to Africa, I felt the black child getting pushed just one step further away from owning this story than the white child. The Prince was no longer simply a German fairy tale hero; he was a fairy tale hero having to give an explanation for why he was in Germany.

There isn’t any data on the number of black Germans in the 19th century, but my guess is there weren’t that many. So historically speaking, the script was probably right in pointing out that the Prince wasn’t from Germany.

But what importance should such a historical fact have in our present and future? What importance should we give it in the face of a new history as it is being created every day by diverse societies?

What the script writers of The Salt Princess did when they inserted an explanation for the black Prince’s presence into this story mirrors what we do in current interpretation practice: it is the weight given to scientifically established ‘truth’, and the belief in objectivity as expressed by ‘accurate facts’. Like interpreters, the production team possibly thought that it was their duty not only to entertain, but also to educate.

‘Education’ is a core concept in current interpretation philosophy. It is in reference to education that Freeman Tilden in his seminal book Interpreting Our Heritage (1957) defined heritage interpretation, and most writers have followed suit. A discourse has been built around Tilden’s account that places subject specialists at the centre as those who research and understand heritage. Visitors are viewed as not having any meaningful connections to heritage, which is why interpretation is needed to help them make these connections, and to create meanings.

In this talk I want to argue that these approaches to interpretation are no longer adequate, particularly in an age of migrations. I want to suggest that they in fact create categories and force distinctions that undermine what has been called post-migrant societies (Bundeszentrale für Politische Bildung 2015), that is societies where the realities of migration have been acknowledged.

In the following, I will first look at the relationship between people and heritage, and how migration has added another layer of complexity to these questions of what heritage is and how it is created. For this, I am first going to turn to Paul Basu’s study of roots tourism to the Scottish Highlands, called Highland Homecomings (Basu 2007).
Basu accompanied people from abroad on their journey to Scotland. He found that visiting Scotland for them was an expression of identity. They were visiting ‘home’, and through this act of visiting they were able to find a ‘sense of belonging’ (p. 10) and their roots (p. 48).

Basu found that particularly for Australians and US Americans, roots tourism was an accepted and safe performance of identity through a visit to the place which in their minds was where they ‘came from’. The places they visited thus played an important role, not for their material attributes, but rather for that sense of belonging and identity that people associated with them (see also Ashby & Schofield 2015).

Basu also found that people’s identity was constructed based on their choice of a determining factor (2007, p.41). This construction of identity narratives was not bound by historical accuracy. Basu found for example that films such as *Braveheart* or John Prebble’s populist book *Culloden* were important in framing people’s identities (p. 89ff), although from a historical perspective, both accounts of the events they describe are inaccurate or plainly fictitious (see for example Watson 1998 for discussions with *Braveheart’s* director).
In Basu’s study, ‘home’ and ‘heritage’ were, at least in part, removed from the places where people usually lived. His study subjects had travelled great distances to come ‘home’ to Scotland, but they did not identify as ‘tourists’ (p.2), nor did they seem to appreciate having that label applied to them. They arrived in this new place already having strong connections with it, stronger perhaps even than the connection they felt with the place that you and I may think they are actually ‘from’, and which therefore we might want to call their ‘home’.

I made similar observations as Basu did while I worked as Learning Manager at Culloden Battlefield. The Battle of Culloden took place in 1746 between the Government troops of King George II and the supporters of the exiled Stuart king, James III. Historically speaking, the battle was significant for Britain, because it was the last pitched battle fought on British soil, and it marked the end of Stuart aspirations to the British throne. From then on, it’s a straight line to the current House of Windsor.

One day, after I had guided a tour around the battlefield and said good-bye at Leanach Cottage, the cottage in this picture, one man came up to me after everyone else had left. I can’t remember whether he was Canadian, American or Australian, but he had certainly come a long way. Now he had tears in his eyes, and he grabbed my arm and said, ‘I am so glad I was able to come here before I die.’

Like Basu (2007, p.55ff) found in his study, this man seemed to be on a pilgrimage. This was his place of heritage, but not because of the battle’s historic significance. Nor was he perturbed by the fact I had shared, that the Highland Clearances, which had forced so many people to leave Scotland, did not happen because of Culloden. For many descendants like him, this battlefield is the place they come to, to express and deepen this part of their story, and to mourn that sense of loss their families carried with them as they left Scotland. Historians’ assessment did not matter.

In these examples, people were not directly ‘from’ the place they described as ‘home’, and yet they had very strong and emotional connections to it. For them, it was part of their identity, much in the same way as people much closer to a place identify with it, and use elements from its history to create and perform their own identities, not only as individuals but also as members of a larger community. When they describe ‘home’ and ‘heritage’, it sounds just the same as it did with the descendants of the Scottish Diaspora.

To illustrate this, I will now share some results from fieldwork I did at the Battle of Hastings and at Varusschlacht in Germany. In both places, I spoke to people who were nationals of the country in question.
Here are some of the things that people at the Battle of Hastings site said during these interviews:
I categorized the things that people said, and this expression of personal and/or national identity was in fact the second most often mentioned benefit of a visit.

What was interesting here was that for some this identity related simultaneously to the ‘English’ that fought in the battle, and to the society subsequently created by the Normans – both understood as ‘us’. This further illustrates what Basu observed: that the true meaning of historical facts becomes fluid in the creation of identity, heritage and a sense of ‘home’, changing according to the speaker’s needs (Basu 2007, p.165ff; see also Côté 1996; Antaki et al. 1996).

This connection to place and sense of identity was evident in my study in Germany also, at a place called Varusschlacht, in English is still called the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest (although the battle did not in fact take place in the Teutoburg Forest).

Visitor Responses, Battle of Hastings

‘I think what happened here nearly 1000 years ago makes us very much what we are as British and English people today.’ (M, 35-44)

‘[T]his is where I come from, this is my heritage, this is to do with me involved with the nation…to be here reminded us of being British.’ (F, 45 – 54)

‘For me I’m proud to be English, so… I like to know how it all happened and what happened and how we came here really.’ (F, 18 – 24)
In A.D. 9, in the north of modern-day Germany, three Roman legions under the command of Publius Quintilius Varus were ambushed and decimated by an alliance of German tribes led by Arminius, a prince of the Cherusci tribe (for this and the following see Bendikowski 2008; Wells 2003; Seeba 1995; Sheldon 2001).

This is Varus on the coin on the left, while the statue on the right is generally considered to represent Arminius.

Without going into too much detail, the interesting aspect about Varusschlacht is that Arminius was actually one of Varus’ own commanders. It is unclear under what circumstances Arminius became a Roman soldier or why he changed his allegiance. However, he managed what no-one had managed before: to unite the divided German tribes against the Romans, and to stage the only successful native revolt (Sheldon 2001, p.2).

There is some disagreement between historians over the immediate impact of the battle on Roman policy toward Germany. But whether Rome had no real designs on Germany anyway, or whether these designs ended after the defeat, the fact is that there were no further Roman attempts to capture this area.
At Varusschlacht, in interviews visitors expressed a similar sense of national and personal identity as did visitors at the Battle of Hastings, although not to the same degree for reasons I will return to later. Here, they said things like:
Both at the Battle of Hastings and at Varusschlacht people also said things that underline the importance of place and being in the place where history happened. Again, one gets the sense that they are on a pilgrimage:

Visitor Responses, Varusschlacht

‘For me, history is something that shaped people, a part of our own culture, our personality.’ (M, 45-54)

‘Self-image. It’s important to know where we come from.’ (M, 25-34)

‘After all it is also our country or our home or whatever you want to call it.’ (F, over 65)

‘Our origins, our development.’ (M, 45-54)
In addition to interviews, I also did quantitative surveys at both sites, which sought to test the results from the interviews. What is particularly interesting here is that ‘being in the place where history happened’ and ‘personal or national identity’ were in the top three most often mentioned benefits of a visit to a heritage site, and of heritage in general at both sites.

What we have seen so far in this talk is that people can have, and often do have, very strong connections to place. It is a connection that is based on their identity and the meaning they give to historical facts in the construction of this identity. Jay Rounds (2006, p.134) speaks of people doing ‘identity work’ at museums, which I think captures very nicely what people in the examples in this talk did and what they talked about. Rounds defines identity work not only as constructing identity, but also as maintaining it and affirming it to others (ibid). He also notes that identities change, and during a visit to a museum, people may well collect elements they may use in the future to construct a different identity (p. 136ff).

In the quotes from my interviews, and the examples in Basu’s study, place also emerged as an anchor for experiencing and expressing identity, heritage and home. It also provides what Smith (2006, p.46) described as the ‘culturally correct or
appropriate contexts and times’. Place becomes a stage, if you like. For the purpose of this talk, I am satisfied with this definition of the role of place in heritage, but I do want to point you to Rodney Harrison’s notion of the ‘ontology of connectivity’ (Harrison 2013, p.229). This provides a far more nuanced consideration of place as material environment and the ways in which it interacts with human and non-human actors.

Whether as stage or part of an ontology of connectivity, we have seen that place itself does not, through its material attributes, constitute heritage. Rather, ‘heritage’ emerges as selection and appropriation, individual and communal, of historical facts and the creation of meaning attached to place as part of a wider process of the construction of identities. And just like identities change, so can heritage.

I will illustrate this with the example of the Hermann’s Monument.
This monument is in the actual Teutoburg Forest, and it is meant to represent Arminius, who in colloquial German is generally called Hermann. In its history so far the monument has changed its meaning on several occasions already.

The statue first was intended as a unifying figure, bringing the many German kingdoms together for the benefit of their citizens (Roth 2012, p.32/3). By the time of its completion in 1875, the kingdoms had been united and the statue now was the symbol of a unified German monarchy (ibid). It changed its meaning again after the Second World War. A commemorative stone on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the statue evokes the ‘unification of all peoples through peace’.

What the statue therefore in particular shows is that meaning does not reside in the material. It is changed and adapted by people according to their circumstances and desires, just like identity is.

These circumstances and desires are sometimes directed at the future. Johanna Zetterstrom-Sharp’s (2014) case study of Sierra Leone provides a good example of this. Zetterstrom-Sharp argues that in post-colonial and post-civil war Sierra Leone aspects of the past are selected carefully for the country’s memory (p. 8) and, as I
would say, its identity, not out of a desire to preserve ‘collective pasts’ (p.4) but to shape ‘collective futures’ (ibid). For this purpose, the more recent, troubled past of the civil war is left out, while those aspects that may help the country move forward (p. 16) have received the greatest attention. Zetterstrom-Sharp notes that, ‘As with most heritages, it is the idea, rather than the reality, that is important’ (p. 10), and this idea is used to ‘activate…future aspirations’ (p. 2).

So far, we have talked about people who do have what is a traditionally defined claim to a country’s heritage: either they and their ancestors were born there, or just their ancestors were.

But what about immigrants? Those born to immigrant parents? Or Global Nomads, moving from one country to the next for work? What about refugees?

What is their heritage? And where is their ‘home’?
This is a picture from my hometown in the south of Germany. It has 5,000 inhabitants (Järkel 2015). In 2015, when Germany registered over a million asylum seekers (Eurostat 2016), more than 1,000 of them were first brought to my hometown (Järkel 2015). That is an increase of 20%, and these 20% were all people from other countries.

Initially the focus was on housing and registering new arrivals, but soon this shifted to the question of how to ensure their integration into ‘host’ societies, not only in Germany but across Europe. Culture was identified as an important factor in this process. In 2016, the European Commission hosted a Voices of Culture Structured Dialogue on the Integration of Refugees and Migrants through Culture (European Commission 2016). I participated in the dialogue on behalf of ICOMOS.

We started off with a very important discussion about terminology: what did the European Commission mean by ‘integration’? Was this ‘assimilation’? Did it express the expectation that the new arrivals would simply adopt the culture and values of their host societies? The group felt that ‘inclusion’ was a better term, which was understood to describe a two-way process in which not only new arrivals adapted and changed but also what I call the natives.
Incidentally, this is how the European Council for Refugees and Exiles, or ECRE defines ‘integration’: as a ‘dynamic two-way process… of change’ (European Council for Refugees and Exiles 2005, p.14). ECRE also specifically described integration in contrast to assimilation, which is seen to seek to replace the values and norms of the refugees by those of the host society (European Council for Refugees and Exiles 2005, p.14).

For the group in the Structured Dialogue, this notion of inclusion or integration as a process of all-round change was central. In the final report, we therefore highlighted the destructive impact of the opposite, the assimilatory approach:

"[People] are likely to feel that their legitimate status and human dignity are undermined; that their own values and cultural rights are devalued; and that European society, far from being open and democratic, is in fact xenophobic and insular.” (De Bock et al. 2016, p.4).

And we went one step further and concluded that these conditions ‘encourage the growth of exclusion, violence and extremism/radicalisation on both sides.’ (ibid).

I have since learnt that there is a socio-political concept that captures the kind of society that we in effect were describing with our notion of integration. It is called ‘convivialism’. The idea first emerged in the 1970s, but it was in 2014 that a Convivialist Manifesto was published (Clarke 2014). The manifesto describes convivialism as ‘a mode of living together […] that values human relationships and cooperation [...]’ (Clarke 2014, p.25).

This may sound a bit rosy, but conflict is actually at the very core of convivialism. Conflict, the manifesto argues, ‘is a necessary and natural part of every society’ (ibid). In other words, people are not meant to be the same, they don’t all have to adopt the same values and ideals, and in this it doesn’t matter whether they were all born in the same place or come from different countries. There will always be a difference in interests and opinions.

The Convivialist manifesto does acknowledge that people have a common tendency to want to live together in harmony and to cooperate. But it argues that people also want to be recognized as unique, and this in itself creates rivalry (ibid), and thus conflict. The key is not to allow this natural rivalry to descend into rejection of the other.

This mechanism, of acknowledging conflict but managing it democratically, is captured in the concept of agonism. In her book Agonistics (Mouffe 2013), Chantal
Mouffe, who incidentally also signed the Convivialist manifesto, explains that in agonism there are ‘adversaries’, but not enemies. Adversaries share democratic principles, and while they have conflicting views (Mouffe 2013, p.7) they also recognise the legitimacy of their opponent’s demands (Mouffe 2013, p.138). The point is, the concept of agonism embraces plurality.

Looking at the arrival of migrants of whatever type in a ‘host’ society from the point of view of agonism therefore means to embrace the notion of diverse views and of conflicts, and to acknowledge the existence of a hegemonic struggle. The goal is not to harmonize ideas, values and interpretations between natives and newcomers, but to harmonize the processes of engagement. And at the heart of this is once again change, including a potential change in the dominant view, or as we may say in our context, the dominant culture and heritage.

In August last year, a book was published in Germany called Die Neuen Deutschen, or ‘The New Germans’ (Münkler & Münkler 2016). Intriguingly to me, the book’s subtitle is, ‘A country before its future.’ After discussing the different forms of migration and looking at previous immigration to Germany, the book eventually arrives at its central question: how to ‘make Germans’ out of the newcomers. This of course prompts the question: what makes a German in the first place?

I found it truly refreshing that in their definition of a German the authors made not a single reference to history or heritage. At least not in the way that perhaps you and I might have done. Beside commitment to the German constitution they chose beliefs that are about being able to care for one’s self and achieve social goals through one’s efforts as attributes of a German. They chose the belief that one’s faith has no impact on one’s progress in society and that one may choose their partner freely also. (Münkler & Münkler 2016, p.288). If you are British, or any other nationality, you may read this and think, well, I have those beliefs too, but I am not German.

And that is exactly why I like what the authors have done here. They have established that agonistic framework of rules that should govern our actions ‘as Germans’, living in this place called Germany, but without calling these beliefs themselves ‘German’. ‘Being German’ according to the authors is not about ethnicity, or nationality, or culture, or indeed heritage. It is about commitment to a way of living together. I would add to this that this is also and crucially a commitment to a way of living together in this particular place. That is why these beliefs that you here in Britain may share also make new Germans of those living in Germany.

For the people in this picture, and the natives too, this opens up a perspective for the future that can be shaped by all of us together, without insisting on narrow categories
that are predefined according to where we come from ‘originally’.

In this talk so far, I have given examples that paint a picture of heritage that looks like this:
We have seen that people have very strong connections to the places with which they associate a sense of heritage, and we have seen that this connection and sense of heritage is also deeply emotional. People went on pilgrimages to the places that were symbolic to them. Coming to these places was a deliberate act, to express their identity, both to themselves and to others, and to form and re-form that identity. Being in this place was a way of deepening that already existing sense of connection, not only to place but also to the people that came before and to those who walk along the same path in the present. Visiting a site was a reaffirmation of that past and present community, and a way of locating one’s sense of belonging and a sense of home.

We have seen that people’s heritage is not determined by science, or scientific fact. People pick and choose and interpret history to suit their own needs, to create a narrative of identity that works for them now, that inspires them, and explains their world to them. Sometimes, as we have seen, people also choose aspects of history that help them build a new future and tell a new story about themselves. In this, we have seen that heritage is responsive, it is changing, because it is not given, or residing in the material, but created by people.
We have also seen that in an age of migrations, these characteristics of heritage are amplified. Migrations have happened throughout human history, but in recent times they have become faster, and thus their processes are more noticeable. In an age of migrations, heritage has not changed its nature. Rather, the dynamic characteristics of heritage that we have identified here have become more obvious.

This is also the reason why static notions of heritage, and practices based on these notions are no longer appropriate, if they were ever truly appropriate at all. It is to this I want to turn to now in this final section of my talk.
This is Freeman Tilden. He wrote the book on heritage interpretation that is still quoted in textbooks today (see for example Ham 2013), called *Interpreting our Heritage* (Tilden 1957). With this book, he laid the foundation stone for the discourse of interpretation that is still dominant today (see also Staiff 2014).

Before I critique some of the philosophical and practical centrepieces of this discourse, I would like to state for the record that I give Tilden credit for having penned the first true textbook on interpretation, and having made an attempt at giving it a philosophy. It is not Tilden’s fault that over the last sixty years the field of interpretation has made so little effort to challenge his basic concepts, and rather has focused instead on perfecting the practices that are based on them.

Tilden had a material understanding of heritage. He wrote of ‘the Thing’ (Tilden 1957, p.3) or ‘the Treasure itself’ (p. 37), and of the ‘physical memorials of our natural and historic origins’ (p. 100). The protection and preservation of these things, treasures and memorials to Tilden was the ultimate goal of heritage interpretation (p. 37/8, 100).

Tilden noted that a visitor could ‘with his [sic] senses perceive’ (p. 3/4) these material
treasures. But this perception of the material remains on the surface. Visitors may feel ‘aesthetic joy’ (p. 6) at seeing these memorials, but Tilden does not consider this joy to be sufficient or satisfactory. It certainly does not constitute understanding, or meaning, or connection.

For this understanding, it takes specialists. Tilden writes that it is naturalists, historians, and archaeologists who ‘are engaged in the work of revealing…something of the beauty and wonder, the inspiration and spiritual meaning that lie behind the visible material (p. 3/4). As far as Tilden is concerned, nothing can be said about heritage until the specialists have made up their minds about it (p. 23). In other words, for Tilden it is specialists that determine, research and understand what heritage is, and why. It is they who already have an ‘understanding of the greater truths’ (p. 33) behind what can be seen.

The problem with specialists is that their tools and their thoughts aren’t those of the public, Tilden writes (p. 44). And this is where interpretation comes in. Tilden calls interpreters the ‘middlemen’ (p. 4) between specialists and the public.

The picture that emerges in Tilden’s account of heritage and the role of heritage interpretation is therefore something like this:
You have heritage on the far left, which is analysed, researched and thus understood by specialists. They don’t speak the language of the public, however, and so the interpreter ‘translates’ the specialist for the visitor. And that is the visitor on the right, ‘aimless’, as Tilden calls her at one point (p. 105), but with ‘curiosity’ (p. 8) about heritage.

Please note that between the public and the heritage in this account stand the specialist and the interpreter. The visitor is viewed as requiring both the specialist and the interpreter in order to understand heritage.

This account only works because heritage is understood as ultimately separate from people. It is material. It must be studied by specialists, and their findings are then told to visitors by interpreters. Visitors must be educated about heritage, and Tilden’s famous definition of interpretation accordingly is as an ‘educational activity’ (p.8). Yes, Tilden differentiates this from what he calls education ‘in the classroom’ (p. 3), but interpretation to him still has an instrumental educational nature. It is intended to achieve a certain educational outcome, which is expressed in the virtuous circle that Tilden quoted from a National Park Service manual: ‘Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation,
Understanding. Appreciation. Protection. That is what visitors are meant to learn in the classroom of interpretation.

The challenge of course is that in this classroom, there is no law that forces people to stay. This is a key factor in Tilden’s thinking about interpretive practice, and why he frames it as different from classroom education and therefore requiring different approaches. Tilden writes about the need for interpreters to find a way of connecting something in the visitor’s life to the ‘treasure’ (p. 105). He advises interpreters to present a whole picture (p. 41) or a ‘story’ (p. 42) rather than individual parts or facts. Interpretation, he writes, should inspire people to want to find out more (p. 42). After all, in interpretive contexts, we can’t force them to learn.

In summary, then, Tilden created an account wherein heritage is material, and visitors need to be educated about the greater truths beyond this material. Visitors have no meaningful connection with heritage, and it is only through interpretation, and the knowledge gained by specialists, that visitors can understand, and thus appreciate heritage. The ultimate goal of interpretation is to protect heritage.

I have titled this slide, ‘The Interpretive Authorized Heritage Discourse’ or short, IAHD, and you will have realised by now why this is so. The characteristics that Laurajane Smith (2006) in her book Uses of Heritage has identified and called the ‘Authorized Heritage Discourse’ are evident in Tilden’s account too. What is more, successive writers have built on this account and created a discursive formation of heritage interpretation that is still dominant today.

In developing Tilden’s concepts further, interpretation is now also widely described as communication (see for example Ham 1992; National Association for Interpretation n.d.; Knudson et al. 2003). Consequently, textbooks spend considerable time discussing communication techniques, which Tilden had already touched on. A core practice within this view of interpretation as communication is the creation and the use of themes (Veverka 1994; Beck & Cable 2002; Knudson et al. 2003; Lee 1998; Ham 1992).
Thematic interpretation

- Themes ‘help interpreters select...facts and concepts’
  (Ham 1992, p. 23)

- A theme is ‘the main point or message a communicator is trying to convey’
  (Ham 1992, p. 21, my emphasis)

- A theme is ‘the specific message...we want to communicate to the audience’
  (Ham 2013, p. 34)

- ‘a theme is a meaning’
  (Ham 2013, p. 119, footnote 3)

Thematic interpretation is already established in Tilden’s book when he writes of the ‘skilled raconteur’ who ‘excludes every word and phrase that does not lead directly to his ending’ (Tilden 1957, p.31). This is also a key purpose of themes that Sam Ham identified in 1992 in his book *Environmental Interpretation* (Ham 1992), as you can see in this first quote: themes ‘help interpreters...select facts and concepts’ (p. 23).

Ham wrote that a theme is ‘the main point or message a communicator is trying to convey’ (Ham 1992, p. 21, my emphasis). In his latest book *Interpretation. Making a Difference on Purpose* (Ham 2013), Ham defines a theme as ‘the specific message...we want to communicate to the audience’ (p. 34). A theme is the ‘main point or idea’ (Ham 2013, p.20), but perhaps most importantly, ‘a theme is a meaning’ (Ham 2013, p. 119, footnote 3).

This brings us to another important concept in contemporary interpretation discourse, and that is interpretation as meaning-making. Again, the seeds for this idea are already evident in Tilden. Tilden wrote in his forth principle that interpretation provides ‘the provocation to the visitor to search out meaning for himself [sic]’ (Tilden 1957, p.36).

A lot of people argue that Tilden’s words here, that the visitor should search out meaning *for himself*, mean that Tilden had no designs on determining what that
meaning was. I disagree. The meaning visitors are to form, in Tilden’s account, is described by his virtuous circle: visitors are to understand heritage, as researched by specialists. They are to then appreciate that heritage, and with this understanding and appreciation they are to support the primary goal of all: protection of that heritage.

Of course Tilden did not suggest that any meaning were magically put into the heads of visitors by the interpreter. He was a journalist, he understood how communication works. And precisely because he did understand communication, he put into his book practical suggestions on how to get visitors to understand, appreciate and protect. That meaning-making is not nearly as democratic and open as many interpreters suggest is also something that Sam Ham shone a light on in his latest book when he wrote about zones of tolerance.
Ham defines three zones: the narrow zone, the wide zone and the unrestricted zone. Ham makes clear that what zone the interpretation in question falls into is dependent on its desired goal (Ham 2013, p.152).

This is an important observation, because it emphasises once again that in contemporary interpretation discourse, interpretation has a specific goal, something that it is trying to achieve.

In the narrow zone, your objectives might be linked to learning something specific, or behaving in a certain way (Ham 2013, p.161ff).

The next zone is wider but there is still a ‘desired response’ (Ham 2013, p.156) from audiences.

Only in the unrestricted zone does interpretation not care about the meanings visitors make (Ham 2013, p.153). It is enough that they are encouraged to make meaning at all.

However, Ham notes that ‘most heritage interpretation probably falls’ (p. 156) into
the wide zone. In other words, most heritage interpretation, according to Ham, has a specific meaning or range of meanings that it wants visitors to make.

I would now like to give you a specific example of what this means in practice, and for this, I will return to Germany and Varusschlacht.

The discipline of heritage interpretation is not widely known in Germany, and therefore neither is the discourse that I have just reviewed. Nevertheless, in my fieldwork I identified what we may call a theme for the site, and this can loosely be paraphrased as ‘Varusschlacht is a symbol of a shared European history toward peace and European integration’.

What is most interesting here is not what the theme includes but rather what it excludes. It excludes an identification with Arminius as a German hero and with the achievement of these German tribesmen in defeating three Roman legions. In my interviews with staff, and my analysis of the language used in the interpretation, my impression was that behind these exclusions lay the fear that the story would be misappropriated by right-wing groups.

Tilden wrote that the ‘priceless ingredient’ (Tilden 1957, p.90) of interpretation is love – love for people, and love for the resource. This has given rise to an assumption that what motivates interpreters is intrinsically good, and that the meanings we want visitors to create in the wide zone are ‘by definition, positive’ (Ham 2013, p.156).

And taking the example of my case study in Germany, who could argue with the wish not to support right-wing interpretations of Varusschlacht?

It was probably with this in mind that the curators wrote the following sentence on one of the last key panels in the exhibition about Arminius:
‘One thing may be noted already: Arminius can no longer serve as a political role model, and that’s good, isn’t it?’.

What is striking is that here I found the only noticeable sign of vandalism on the entire site including the park. Underneath this sentence, somebody had scribbled onto the panel, ‘No, he will forever remain our hero’.

This person wasn’t the only one who objected to what we may call the ‘preferred reading’ (MacDonald 2009, p.147) of the site. My interviews with visitors suggest that others were very aware of this preferred reading also and that it made them guarded in how they expressed themselves to me.

Nevertheless, some did make comments that hinted at their disagreement: some noted the achievement of the Germans, and others noted the characteristics that must have made Arminius a leader able to unite tribes that had previously been divided. One gentleman made the point specific: he criticised what he called a one-sided story and a lack of objectivity.

The example of the thematic interpretation at Varusschlacht shows the impact of the
exclusions a theme is based on. If we remind ourselves of the very strong personal connections to identity and nationhood that visitors had expressed in relation to the site and its history, we realise that in effect, the preferred reading dismissed these connections, and to some extent treated them as suspicious. And when I compared visitors’ responses in Germany to those of visitors in England, where the preferred reading was far more in line with the meanings that visitors brought to the site, the indication was that the theme at Varusschlacht disrupted how visitors were able to engage with the site as their heritage.

Of course, there are other factors here that may have influenced this response or lack of it, and which may have something to do with Germany’s wider cultural development since the Second World War. Nevertheless, my case studies suggest that thematic interpretation is not only discursively limiting the meanings that visitors are allowed to make, but also practically undermining how they are able to explore and express their own, existing connections to heritage.

In summary, the key elements of the interpretive authorized heritage discourse are to view interpretation as education, as translation of specialist language, as helping visitors to make connections and to create meaning, and to achieve specific outcomes, particularly conservation.

This is at odds with much that I have illustrated at the beginning of this talk, where heritage emerged as a selection and appropriation of history by people in a creative interplay with place, and as something that people have very strong and emotional connections to.
This discrepancy between the Interpretive Authorized Heritage Discourse and these empirical insights into what heritage is for people takes on a new concern when it comes to approaching heritage interpretation in an age of migrations.

I want to argue that here, the concepts of the IAHD become an obstacle. They do not allow us to respond to the diversity of post-migrant societies and instead force us to divide them up into separate and distinct groups. Like the scriptwriters of The Salt Princess, the IAHD pushes us to give a scientifically accurate explanation for the presence of people in a certain country. While it may pursue social integration as one of its goals, interpretation based on the IAHD subtly but forcefully maintains a historical separation between migrants and ‘natives’, where the latter group is always more native than the former. Precisely because the IAHD seeks to preserve heritage, narratives are told and retold in ways that resist the changes necessary and in fact natural in post-migrant societies. The preoccupation of the IAHD to deliver certain outcomes also forces a focus that necessarily is unresponsive to the change and uncertain destinations of post-migrant societies.

So how could we approach heritage interpretation differently in an age of migrations?
I’ve highlighted many of the concepts already in this talk that I think must form the basis of any new approach to interpretation. The most central of these is that heritage must be understood as created from the personally relevant selections and creative appropriation of elements of the past by people. Heritage must be understood as a performance and creation of identity, personal and communal, where place is a stage and co-creator. As such, interpretation must acknowledge that the task is not to connect people to heritage: people are already connected, heritage already has meaning for them. They have created it.

Heritage in this new approach to interpretation must also be recognised as not concerned so much with the past, but with the present and more importantly, the future.

This new approach to heritage interpretation must furthermore be based in the understanding that heritage is always in the plural: it is diverse, contested and often contradictory. Conflict is a natural part of heritage. And so is change.

As we’ve seen, there is indeed a role for interpretation to show what is already there, which provides an introduction and orientation for those that have newly arrived. But from there the step is short for them to want to participate, to make this place their place, their home. People will want to create their heritage here, and interpretation must make that possible for them.

And how might it do that?

The gentleman at Varusschlacht told me that he felt the story presented was one-sided. That must be a central element of this new approach to heritage interpretation in an age of migrations: to make visible all sides of a story, all interpretations, and all representations.

Making visible representations is an important point. Ultimately, what we are confronted with in heritage are representations of the world. Dissonant (Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996) or contested heritage is made up of differing representations of an aspect of history. And as people arrive in a new place and a new country they bring with them and they create their own representations. Making visible these different and diverse representations is the ideal for which we must strive. We may not always be able to achieve it, in fact, we are unlikely to. But if interpretation is to have a goal, this must be it.

In an age of migrations, heritage interpretation can no longer be concerned with delivering specific outcomes clustered around making connections, facilitating appreciation or changing behaviours, for example toward conservation. Heritage interpretation must instead become an infrastructure. It must be a tool for people to
use for their own purposes, not for interpreters to use on people.

The infrastructure I envisage is both a guide around place and a magnifying glass for representations that are present there. It is a tool and a space to both encounter the diversity and conflict of post-migrant societies, and to jointly create new heritages and new futures.

Earlier I mentioned Chantal Mouffe and her concept of agonistics. She spoke of agonistic public spaces as spaces where ‘conflicting points of view are confronted without any possibility of a final reconciliation’ (Mouffe 2013, p.92). Talking about public art she noted its special purpose as ‘making visible what the dominant consensus tends to obscure and obliterate, [in] giving a voice to all those who are silenced within the framework of the existing hegemony’ (Mouffe 2013, p.93).

What Mouffe describes here, underpinned by her concepts of agonism and the hegemonic struggle for dominance, to me encapsulates what this new approach to heritage interpretation, not only but particularly in an age of migrations must be based on and deliver. For this reason, I have recently decided to term this new approach agonistic interpretation. It is a suggestion for the future of the discourse and practice of heritage interpretation that I hope you and others will find interesting and seek to develop further with me. What I have presented here is not the end of this discussion about what agonistic interpretation is or what it might be. It is the very beginning, and the practices that might support it must still be developed in detail and tested further in practice. First steps have been taken already in the direction of agonistic interpretation, although not under this name and not completely freed from the IAHD. The National Park Service’s format of facilitated dialogue is one such example. But we will need further experiments and further studies before agonistic interpretation becomes a reality as a new approach to heritage interpretation.

However, whether we pursue agonistic interpretation or something else, the IAHD will not be able to keep abreast with the changes in our post-migrant societies. As I have shown, it is more likely to be an obstacle than a support. And that is an observation that must serve us as motivation to look for something different. In the future, interpretive practice must achieve more than did the writers of *The Salt Princess*. We must acknowledge and make possible that a black child can own the story and its Prince just as the white child can, for they are both of this country. They are both at home here. They both can make heritage of this. It is up to them.
Thank you!

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